

## *Mueller Redevelopment: Sunflowers*

Austin is becoming a new urbanist, mixed-use development kind of city. But it is not only large development companies that are making it happen. Small businesses play a large role in helping developers retain the Austin style that brings so many people here in the first place. The project we highlight here is a good example of how a small, local Austin business is helping to implement a sustainable vision for our future.

The “Sunflowers” project, the biggest public art project in Austin’s history, is slowly beginning to develop. The Mueller redevelopment Web site describes the project as “a series of 18- to 20-foot tall flower-shaped sculptures that collect the sun’s rays and convert them into solar energy to light the structures at night.” They will provide shade during the day, and the lights at night will help to light the hike-and-bike trail that runs adjacent to the Mueller property.



The firm in charge of developing the project, Harries/Héder Collaborative, is using the project to display the sustainable, forward-thinking that Austin is trying to incorporate into new developments. The solar panels will produce approximately 30 kilowatts of power, feeding that energy back into the grid to get credits during the day and lighting the structures at night. The financing of the project also displays the public-private partnership that is becoming popular. The master developer of Mueller, Catellus, provided the majority of the funding,

while the City of Austin will contribute over \$60,000 in rebates from its solar rebate program. Applied Materials Inc. also donated \$50,000, as the company is getting into the business of making equipment to manufacture solar panels.

Lajos Héder, one of the project’s designers, stated in early May that they plan to erect the first five units by the end of May. Texas Solar Power Company, a local Austin business that specializes in promoting and implementing renewable energy systems, will install the solar panels. Craig Overmiller, one of their owners, said that they are waiting on an easement from Austin Energy, but that over the next few weeks the company will be running the conduit line and will put in the solar panel modules and inverters.

As the Mueller development completes its initial stages, we are very glad to see the lead developer and project manager, Catellus, use a local Austin business for a highly-visible, sustainable project. The City of Austin’s Small Business Development Program will continue to update the public on the projects status.



*Article written by Lewis Leff on May 7, 2008. SBDP would like to thank Lajos Héder and Craig Overmiller for taking the time to be interviewed for this article on May 6, 2008.*

*For more information on these two companies please visit [www.harriesheder.com](http://www.harriesheder.com) and [www.txspc.com](http://www.txspc.com).*